



Backyard Buddies



Photo: Bill & Mark Bell

Huntsman Spider

Some Huntsman species live quite socially in groups of up to 300. They will help raise children together and even share food.

In 2006 a new type of Huntsman was discovered. It's called the Tiger Huntsman and is bright orange. It's also one of the largest Huntsman and so far it's only been found in a small area of far north Queensland.

There are 100 known species of Huntsman in Australia but it's believed there are plenty more yet to be discovered.

They're found in most states and territories of Australia, so you've got a good chance of spotting this buddy. In warm weather, or when it rains, they are often seen inside homes, on walls and ceilings.

The female huntsman spider makes a great mum. She will lay all 200 of her eggs inside an egg sack which she places behind bark or under a rock. While the babies are developing she will stand guard to protect them day and night for three weeks without even eating.

When the babies are ready to hatch, some huntsman mums will moisten the sack that's covering them and help tear it open. She can be a bit touchy when she's looking after her babies. You may see her rear up to scare away any predators nearby.

It is a good sign to have a huntsman around your house because while you are sleeping at night, they are getting rid of any creepy crawlies that may be hiding. They like to hunt alone and don't use webs to catch their prey. Instead they will slowly stalk an insect until its close enough to pounce on. Don't be alarmed by their hunting behaviour, because their venom won't hurt humans and they're very scared of us.

Simple things that you do can make a huge difference to Australia's animals. That's why the Foundation for National Parks & Wildlife is running Backyard Buddies— to give you tips to help.

What is a backyard buddy?

Backyard buddies are the native animals that share our built-up areas, our beaches and waterways, our backyards and our parks. The huntsman spider is a backyard buddy.

Backyard buddies are also the local people who value the living things around them, like huntsman spiders, and are willing to protect and encourage them by doing a few simple things around their own homes. So you can be a backyard buddy.

Be a backyard buddy

It's easy. All you have to do is care... and take a few simple steps. Step one is to find out what huntsman spiders do and do not like.

Huntsman spiders love:

Bark and rocks – which offer protection during the day and a safe place to hide their egg sac.

Cockroaches – huntsmans are carnivorous and will feed on all sorts of insects but these are some of their favourites.

Leaf litter – around your backyard where their prey lives.

But they don't like:

Insecticides – which can kill them and their food sources. Don't spray huntsman spiders, they are harmless to you and will eat all your cockroaches.

Cold weather – as it's much harder for them to find food in winter as many bugs hibernate.

Rain – which drives them to try and find shelter. This can sometimes turn out to be inside your nice, dry house.

Spider wasps – which paralyse them, drag them back to a den, and lay an egg on them. When the egg hatches, they become dinner.

Webs – as they catch their prey without one.

Be a huntsman spider buddy

Try to:

- Leave rocks in your garden to attract huntsman spiders into your backyard.
- Check for gaps under your doors and block up any if you'd prefer the huntsman to stay outside.

- Admire them from a distance as they are quite shy and easily startled.
- Put a glass over them if they are indoors, and slide a piece of paper under it to transport your huntsman safely outside.

Avoid:

- Using insecticides in your house and garden.
- Moving rocks unnecessarily. There might be some spider eggs under them.
- Touching spiders, as they can bite.

Don't be surprised if:

- You see a huntsman run along your dashboard. Remember, they won't try to attack you. They are more scared of you than you are of them!
- You see them become more active at night. This is because all huntsmans are nocturnal.

Backyard Buddies is an initiative of The Foundation for National Parks & Wildlife (ABN 90 107 744 771), a registered charity with the ACNC, with Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR). Donations over \$2 are tax-deductible and we thank you for your support.

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Australia is a land like no other, with about one million different native species. More than 80 per cent of the country's flowering plants, mammals, reptiles and frogs are unique to Australia, along with most of its freshwater fish and almost half of its birds.